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* THE HON. SRI R. VENKATARAMAN : The complaint is valid (laughter) and I thought silence was acquiescence. The rule that the questions which are one month old may be included in the Agenda may be adopted in this House also so that whatever answers are available will be given and further answers will be supplied later.

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : I wish to give some information to hon. Members. The number of questions admitted is 288 and the number answered is 114. Answers are in hand for 34 questions. Extension of time has been granted for 29 questions. We have not received any answers for 145 questions.

As far as the short notice questions are concerned, it is within the right of the Hon. Minister to waive notice and if he does not do so, we cannot do anything in the matter.

As far as the office is concerned, I think there is no delay here. Whenever questions are sent by hon. Members, they are looked into promptly.

SRI B. K. NALLASWAMI : There is delay in the Council office. It is twenty days since I sent a question. I do not know even about the approval of the question of its disapproval. Nothing has been done in the matter.

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : It will be looked into.

III.—CALLING ATTENTION TO THE SHORTAGE OF WRITING AND PRINTING PAPER IN THE MARKET AND THE CONSEQUENT RISE IN THE COST OF PAPER. 11-20 a.m.

SRI T. P. SRINIVASAVARADAN : Mr. Deputy Chairman, under rule 41 (1) of the Council Rules, I seek your permission to call the attention of the Minister for Labour and Industries to a matter of urgent public importance, viz., the shortage of writing and printing paper in the market and the consequent rise in the cost of paper and the hardship caused (i) to the publishers for printing the text-books and releasing them in time and (ii) to the educational institutions for conducting their terminal and annual examinations. The text-book publishing season and note-book season have already begun. During the last few months, on account of non-availability and consequent high cost of printing paper, many publishers have used newsprint and other inferior paper not fit for printing text-books. Text-books using inferior paper do not last even for three months.

Further, it is reported that the paper mills do not generally accept direct indents from *bona fide* consumers. Even when they accept, paper is supplied after a very long time, say, after a year. The sole distributors in each State supply only to wholesale dealers and not to the retailers. The paper dealers, as things stand at present, are not bound by the price fixed by the mill and they go on increasing the price. If the mill price and the price at which

the paper dealers sell are compared, it will be found that the dealers' price is 20 np. to 25 np. per lb. more than the mill rate which means that of the ream of 16 lb. paper the difference is about Rs. 3 to Rs. 4.

Again when a bill is issued by the dealer, the price that is put down is the mill price, but the consumer is made to pay more, the excess being received in the form of cash without a voucher being issued.

(Mr. Chairman in the Chair.)

The Government are requested to take steps for fair distribution of paper, both writing and printing, to consumers at a fairly reasonable price especially in view of the statement made by the Hon. Sri Lal Bahadur Sastri, in the Lok Sabha, that no foreign paper would be allowed to be imported. The consumers who are mostly affected are the educational institutions and the publishers.

* THE HON. SRI R. VENKATARAMAN : Mr. Chairman, the scarcity conditions prevalent in the market of writing and printing paper and its high price were brought to the notice of the Government as early as in January 1958 by certain institutions such as the Sivakasi Master Printers' Association, Sivakasi, the Publishers' Association of Southern India, Madras, the Madras Printers' and Lithographers Association, Madras, and the Headmaster of the Hindu High School, Madras.

The scarcity conditions are due to the drastic cut in the import of paper. The question was taken up with the Union Government and they were requested to make arrangements to improve the supply position of paper in the market so that sufficent quantity of paper might be available to consumers at normal prices. The Union Government stated that in order to combat the scarcity and the high price, two meetings were held with the paper manufacturers and their two associations and that as a result thereof, the mills had agreed to distribute their products equitably and to exercise control over their distributors and retailers. They also stated that the question as to what should be the fair price of paper was engaging their attention and that a decision would be taken soon. In order to combat the shortage of paper for printing of cheap text-books, etc., the Government of India indicated that Nepa Newsprint would be supplied free of duty. A small Sub-Committee has also been formed by the Union Government to deal with complaints about high prices charged by the dealers. Suitable action will be taken if specific instances of high prices of or shortage of paper are brought to the notice of the Development Wing of the Government of India, Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The above position has been explained to the complainants through the Director of Industries and Commerce, Madras.

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The Sivakasi Master Printers' Association, Sivakasi, has again brought to the notice of the Government the scarcity conditions of paper in the market and its high price. The Assistant Directors of Industries and Commerce of Ramanathapuram and Madras have been requested to contact the local agents of Orient Paper Mills, Rohtas Industries, Limited, Mysore Paper Mills, Limited, and Punalur Paper Mills, Limited, and submit a report in the matter. As soon as their reports are received, the matter will be taken to the notice of the Development Wing of the Government of India, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, for necessary action.

I may add, Sir, that it is within the exclusive jurisdiction of the Union Government.

IV.—GOVERNMENT BILL.

THE MADRAS GENERAL SALES TAX BILL, 1959 (L.A. BILL NO. 6 OF 1958)—*cont.*

The Second Schedule—cont.

SRI MOHAMED RAZA KHAN: Mr. Chairman, I have already moved an amendment. As I said yesterday, I had a very good mind not to press my amendment for reasons which were quite obvious but the speech of my esteemed and learned friend Mr. Patanjali Sastri made me press my amendment, and also say a few words.

As far as this industry is concerned, I am sure our esteemed Friend, the Hon. Sri Manickavelu, is well aware of the difficulty and hardship of the skins and hides merchants and tanners because a good deal of them, particularly, come from his district of North Arcot. As I said on a previous occasion, the business is of such a difficult nature that even an increase of one pence this way or that way causes a good deal of loss to those who are in the line or in the trade. The nature of the business is such that, as I have pointed out at an earlier stage, it is only a buyers' market and not a sellers' market particularly in view of the fact that these people have to send their finished stuff to foreign countries like England where auctions do take place and the prices depend on various factors there and not on factors in our country with the result that many big families, who have been doing business for a long time, though they were once flourishing, become nothing one fine morning.

I feel that on a commodity like this a levy of 2 per cent tax is rather too high. In fact, the Hon. Minister is well aware that for a long time, the tax was at one per cent, but as a result of some decision, that being included in the listed goods, it was increased from one to two per cent. I do not know the reasons. Possibly the Minister may clarify.

My own submission is that this is not a real trade or business; it is nothing but an industry. After all, raw skins are purchased for the purpose of manufacturing these finished products. Therefore, it is not a business. It is more in the nature of an industry.